

**The Commission for Historical and Architectural
Preservation - Staff Report
August 12, 2008**



**Landmark Designation Report
Union Mill (Historic Druid Mill)
1500 Union Avenue
Baltimore, MD**

The Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) has the responsibility of recommending to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore the adoption of ordinances designating districts and landmarks within the limits of the City of Baltimore, having special historical, architectural, educational, cultural, social or community significance, interest, or value as Baltimore City Historic Districts or Landmarks, thereby necessitating their preservation and protection. In making its recommendation, the Commission shall give appropriate consideration to the following standards. In reaching its decision, the Commission shall clearly state which standards have been applied.

A Baltimore City Landmark may be a site, structure, landscape, building (or portion thereof), place, work of art, or other object which:

1. dates from a particular period having a significant character, interest, or value, as part of the development, heritage, or culture of the City of Baltimore; or
2. is associated with the life of an outstanding historical person or persons; or
3. is the site of an historic event with a significant effect upon the cultural, political, economic, social, or historic heritage of the City of Baltimore; or
4. is significant of the architectural period in which it was built and has distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, method of construction, or engineering, or is the notable work of a master builder, designer, engineer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or
5. contributes information of historical, cultural, or social importance relating to the heritage of the community; or
6. has yielded, or may be likely to yield, archeological information important in history or prehistory.

Staff Recommendation: Approval



Druid Mill meets CHAP's standards for landmark designation one as an excellent example of a 19th-century mill structure that has contributed to the development, heritage, and culture of Baltimore City by fueling Baltimore's cotton duck industry which during the mid-19th century produced over 80% of the cotton duck in the United States. The mill also meets standard four as a superb example of an Italianate Style architecture and Mill building design. It is one of the country's few Italianate Style mill buildings and the last stone mill building to be constructed in Maryland.***

*** - CHAP's landmark designation standards were altered in 2009. Druid Mill meets these current (2012) CHAP Landmark Designation Standards:

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.





Summary History

In 1866, Businessman Horatio Nelson Gambrill built the southern portion of the Druid Mill. This is the last mill in the Jones Falls Valley built of stone rather than brick. Today, it is the largest stone mill in Maryland and one of the few built in the Italianate Style. Gambrill built the mill after he severed his relationship with Mt. Vernon Mills, which he helped start. He took the proceeds of his sale of the interest in Mt. Vernon and built Druid Mill.

The north portion of the mill was added (in stone) in 1872, doubling the capacity, making it the largest cotton duck mill in the world during its time. It was never powered by water and its original boiler house still exists sandwiched between the original structure and the addition.

In 1880, Horatio Nelson Gambrill died and his sons continued the operation, but by 1890 the company was in financial trouble. By the end of the 1890s, all the cotton mills were combined to form the Mount Vernon-Woodberry Cotton Duck Company. When textile manufacturing ceased ca. 1950s, the building housed other enterprises such as rag processing and washing machine, chrome-furniture production, and janitorial supply production. Life-like products recently occupied the building.

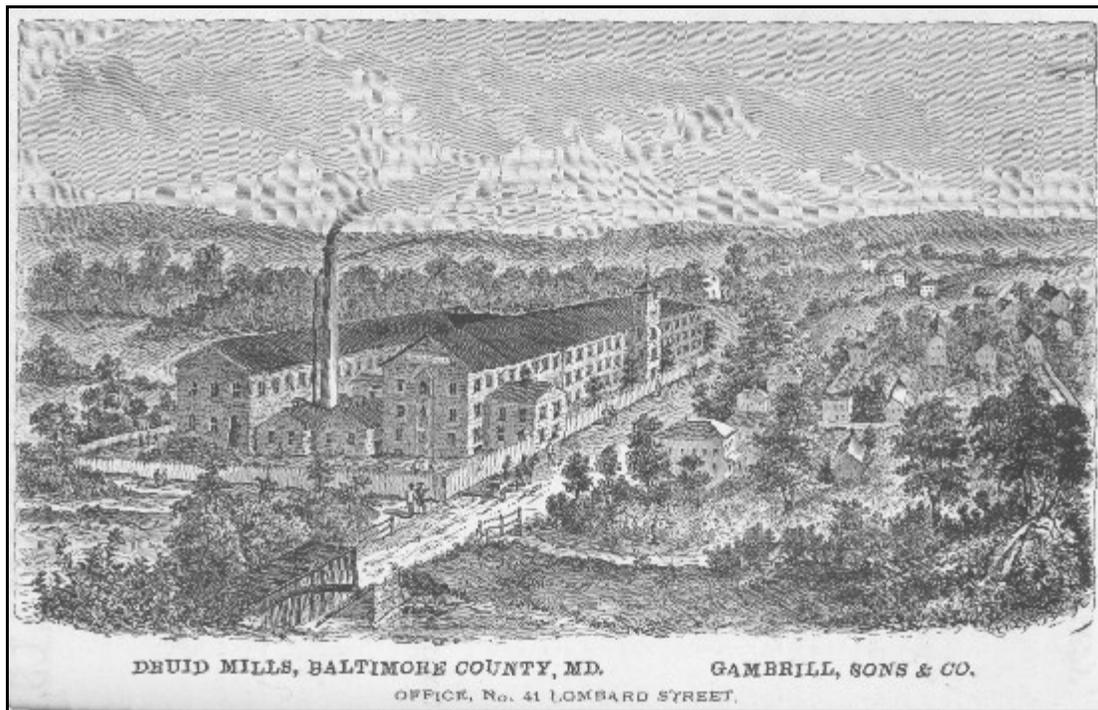
Horatio Nelson Gambrill, named for Admiral Horatio Nelson, was born in 1810 and grew up along the Jones Falls. In the late 1820s, Gambrill apprenticed at Savage Mill in Arundel County. Here, he met his business partner David Carroll. Sometime in the mid-1830s Both Gambrill and Carroll were associated with Stony Works, a small mill that produced cotton products. In 1839 Nelson and Carroll bought the old White Hall flour mill on the Jones' Falls and converted it to producing cotton. During the next few years, they built the Woodberry Mill, which included the use of steam engines. By the mid-

1840s they purchased the old Laurel flour mill and built Mount Vernon Mill #1. By 1847-8 Gambrill and Carroll owned and operated three large mills along the Jones Falls.

Their expansion didn't stop. In 1854, after the White Hall mill burned, they built Clipper Mill. Concurrently, they also constructed Mount Vernon Mill #2 and the Park Mill. By mid-century, the Jones Falls produced the majority of cotton duck in the United States.

Between the late 1850s and early 1860s, Gambrill sold off his share of the original mill properties and in 1865-66 constructed Druid Mill, under the proprietorship of Gambrill, Sons & Company. In 1880 Horatio Nelson Gambrill died and his sons assumed control.

In addition to operating many of the Jones Falls mills, Gambrill also registered four U.S. patents for manufacturing yarn and cotton duck. His inventions were used world-wide and his self-stripping cotton card earned him \$66,000 from British manufacturers alone.



Druid Mill 1873 as it appeared in *The Monumental City* by George Howard.



19th-century view of Meadow Mill and Druid Mill with Hampden in the background.

Neighborhood Notifications:

- In March-April, 2008 we received phone calls, emails and letters from the surrounding neighborhood associations of Hampden and Woodberry requesting designation of the structure.
- CHAP sent three certified letters to the owner of the property; two to 1600 Union Avenue (these were returned) and one to Life-Like Products in Hunt Valley. This was received and signed by Anita Dunkle.
- In May or June of 2008 Mr. Brandon Schultz of Cho, Wilkes, Holback visited the office requesting information on the structure for his client who has an option to purchase the structure and use tax credits for an historic restoration.
- July 2008 CHAP left messages with Focus Development LLC asking them to contact us in regards to landmark designation of the mill property. Focus development LLC is the contract purchaser and has been working on historic preservation tax credit application.
- On July 31, 2008 Jay Kramer of Kramer Brothers Hobbies of Long Island, Inc. requested CHAP reschedule the hearing. On August 4, CHAP rescheduled the hearing for September 9, 2008. At the same time, neighborhood leaders and the City Council were notified of the rescheduling. Subsequently, the regular notification process was followed.